

How to Get Stuff Done: Deep Study¹

Follow these simple steps to let go of distractions and get into the zone.

Rule #1: Use the Pomodoro Method

- Choose your study task to focus on, don't multitask
- Set a time for 10-20 minutes and start on the task (without any interruptions)
- Once the timer sounds, take a 5 minute break to move around, get a snack, etc.
- Do this rhythm 3-4 times, then take a longer 30 minute break as a reward

Rule #2: Eliminate Distractions

- Get your phone away from your body--put it someplace where you can't see it or feel/hear it buzz. *Don't keep it in your pocket.*
- Close out the open tabs on your computer. You only want one thing on your screen (e.g., Blackboard, or a Google Document)
- Don't have Netflix or the TV on in the background
- Try using app blockers like "Self Control" if you can't ignore the distraction
- Set up a designated work space where you'll be able to do your most focused work

Rule #3: Feel the burn!!

- Embrace the initial discomfort of focusing your attention on a challenging task.
 - Just like you might embrace the discomfort of lifting weights or going for a run

Rule #4 Wake up from distracting thoughts

- The goal is to become aware of when your mind wanders off, and bring your attention back to the task at hand.
- Everytime you let go of a distraction and bring your attention back, it's like doing a bicep curl for the mental muscle of attention!
- The more you train your brain to let go of the distraction and return to the task, the less likely you are to give into future distractions.

¹ The idea of "deep study" is derived from Cal Newport's concept of "Deep Work." See Cal Newport, *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2016).